



inspiring people to protect
Bay Area birds since 1917

November 15, 2009

Dear Friend of Golden Gate Audubon,

I thank you for your loyal support of Golden Gate Audubon by presenting you with the enclosed **2009 year-end summary report** of our conservation programs.

This year started hopefully with a new administration in Washington and ended with another tragic oil spill in San Francisco Bay. We saw new reports about the precipitous decline of North American bird populations. Our own monitoring of populations of birds such as the Western Snowy Plover and Western Burrowing Owl demonstrated the continuing risks to local species.

First, let's count the victories: Thanks to your support, our Eco-Oakland and Richmond programs, which have taught environmental stewardship to almost 15,000 students and their families since 1999, received the prestigious Outstanding Local Service Award from the North American Association of Environmental Education.

We successfully fought off development through the Emeryville Crescent, created a safe haven for Burrowing Owls at Berkeley's Cesar Chavez Park, and restored habitat at San Francisco's Pier 94 and Harding Park. We also became an active partner with the Oiled Wildlife Care Network, California's official network for rescuing and rehabilitating wildlife during an oil spill.

Despite our successes, many Bay Area bird species are still under siege:

- At the Alameda Wildlife Refuge, the U.S. Navy is moving ahead with plans to construct a medical complex over endangered California Least Tern habitat.
- The Richmond shoreline, an Important Bird Area, is not protected from development.
- Commercial and residential development plans proceed near Candlestick Point State Recreation Area and along San Francisco's southern waterfront.

That's why we need your help. We remain vigilant, educating the public, providing bird population data to decision makers, speaking up at public hearings, and, when necessary, taking legal action to ensure that bird and wildlife habitat is protected.

Please take a minute to read this report and consider making an additional gift in 2009. The effort of every person who cares about Bay Area birds and wildlife is essential to success. And where else can you make such a direct impact for local birds and wildlife?

Sincerely,

Mark Welther
Executive Director

P.S. Golden Gate Audubon is an independent chapter of the National Audubon Society. Our *local programs* happen because of *local contributions* from people like you.

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GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON

2009 Summary Report on Our Efforts to Conserve San Francisco Bay Area Birds



Once, Western Snowy Plovers freely foraged on San Francisco's beaches, California Quail flocked in Golden Gate Park, and Burrowing Owls populated the East Bay's grasslands. The diversity of habitats, mild climate, and productive food sources in the Bay and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta supported millions of birds annually.

Today, the Bay Area is also home to 7.4 million people. **We have lost more than 90% of the Bay's native wetlands and natural shoreline to urban and agricultural conversion.** Development and pollution continue to threaten and fragment the remaining habitats and natural food sources.

According to the 2009 *State of the Birds* report released by the National Bird Conservation Initiative, **39% of ocean bird species, 40% of grassland species, and 50% of coastal shorebird species are in decline in North America.** Locally, we see these declines every day. Data gathered by Golden Gate Audubon volunteers indicate that there are fewer Western Snowy Plovers wintering on San Francisco's Crissy Field (see next page). California Quail have been nearly extirpated from San Francisco, with only a small remnant covey hanging on in the park's arboretum. At Berkeley's Cesar Chavez Park, we once had at least seven wintering Western Burrowing Owls; today, we have only two.

Over the past year, as it has done every year since 1917, Golden Gate Audubon has worked to protect the birds of the Bay Area. Most of our work is carried out by volunteers and concerned community members. We monitor bird populations, form partnerships, and advocate on behalf of birds

and wildlife at all levels of government. Together, we will continue to help make the Bay Area a safer place for birds and other wildlife.

This brief report presents an overview of our activities during 2009. We hope that it will pique your interest and inspire you to get involved by contributing your time, knowledge, and other resources to helping Golden Gate Audubon protect Bay Area birds.



Bob Lewis

Golden Gate Audubon's Western Snowy Plover Watch monitors wintering plovers at San Francisco's Crissy Fields and on Ocean Beach, protects and improves plover habitat, and advocates for greater protections for the plovers.

The population of the San Francisco Bay Area is expected to exceed 9 million people by 2035. By then, we will also see further impacts on wildlife due to climate change. To protect Bay Area birds and other wildlife, we need to act now to implement effective wildlife monitoring and management.

Summary Table of Birds Observed at 4 Sites on the North Richmond Shoreline (Sept. 2007-Aug. 2008)

Survey Site	Gulls	Shorebirds	Waterfowl	Raptors	Near-shore	Marsh Birds	Total Birds	# of Species
Pt. Pinole	4,970	15,031	35,661	183	2,648	884	59,436	81
West Co. Landfill Loop	11,276	24,652	20,425	431	924	896	58,935	69
West Co. Wastewater Treatment Plant	3,495	5,176	6,771	226	64	441	16,865	56
Wildcat Creek Park	1,391	235	565	289	43	78	2,919	43
Totals	21,132	45,094	63,422	1,129	3,679	2,299	138,155	249

GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON

Monitoring San Francisco Bay Area Bird Populations and Habitats Gathering Information to Protect and Conserve Wildlife



Effective conservation policy and advocacy must be based on sound science. Golden Gate Audubon continues to implement volunteer-driven bird monitoring projects and to rely on the latest Bay Area bird and habitat reports.

Western Snowy Plover Watch: Led by GGA members Matt Zlatunich and Dan Murphy, volunteers continued to document plover decline at Crissy Field and Ocean Beach. All data were presented to the Golden Gate National Recreation Area to improve public land management.

Friends of Alameda Wildlife Refuge: GGA volunteer Leora Feeney led the Tern Watch program to monitor the colony of endangered California Least Terns at the Alameda Wildlife Refuge. Thanks in part to their efforts, the Alameda colony fledged more young than any other colony in California in 2008. Volunteers also monitored California Brown Pelicans and other birdlife at this important site.

North Richmond Shoreline Bird Census: In November, we published our report of bird surveys conducted between 2007 and 2008. GGA volunteers recorded 138,155 birds consisting of at least 93 species (see table on page 2). The report will help guide land management in the area.

Report of Bird Surveys Conducted After the Cosco Busan Spill: In September, we released our report of our survey efforts following the 2007 oil spill, during which GGA volunteers counted 2,207 live oiled birds and 102 dead oiled birds. These findings expanded our understanding of the spill's impacts.

Pier 94 Restoration Monitoring: GGA staffer Jennifer Robinson Maddox continued to monitor the progress of our restoration efforts at San Francisco's Pier 94, where the endangered plant California Sea-blite continues to prosper and American Avocets now nest. Such monitoring is essential to helping us improve restoration efforts and adapt to changing conditions at the site.

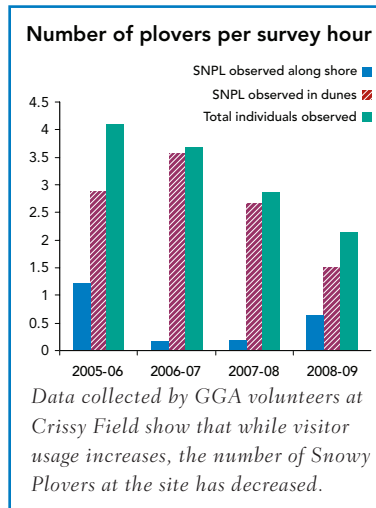
Bird Use of San Francisco's Southern Waterfront: With many dilapidated piers and structures slated for

removal, SF Conservation Committee Chair Noreen Weeden organized the second year of waterfront surveys. This year, we observed at least 27 species that use the piers and two nesting species, including the Western Gull and Caspian Tern. Our information will help the Port of San Francisco protect the birds during redevelopment.

San Francisco Peregrine Watch: This year, GGA board member Mark Mushkat conducted regular visits to downtown San Francisco, where he set up a spotting scope and provided passersby with a glimpse of Peregrine Falcons that nest on the PG&E building and distributed brochures.

Plans for 2010: In addition to participating in the annual Christmas Bird Counts, GGA staff and volunteers will expand

our wintering landbird monitoring in the North Richmond Shoreline and also at Candlestick Point State Recreation Area. We also are developing an oil-spill response plan as a partner in the Oiled Wildlife Care Network, and will convene our newly formed Science Advisory Committee to enhance GGA's citizen-science projects.



Peregrine Falcon eyases nesting at San Francisco's PG&E building.

PROTECTING SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA BIRDS

*by Engaging Our Communities, Government Agencies,
and Elected Officials*



Every day, Golden Gate Audubon staff and volunteers call, write, and educate land managers, elected officials, and other decision makers to protect Bay Area birds. Below are some of our efforts this year:

Alameda Wildlife Refuge: This year, we continued the fight to protect the endangered California Least Terns that nest at the former Naval Air Station and prevent the construction of a medical complex directly atop the terns' nesting habitat. We actively negotiated with the U.S. Navy, Veteran's Administration, EPA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and local officials. We also traveled to Washington, D.C., to urge California's senators and local representatives to protect the terns.

Altamont Pass Wind Turbines and Avian Mortality: We spent much of the year participating in ongoing conservation planning to implement measures that will reduce and mitigate bird mortality from wind turbines in the pass, where thousands of birds are killed each year. We also continued oversight of compliance with our settlement and attempted to improve operations of companies that did not participate in the settlement.

Lights Out for Birds and Bird-friendly Building Guidelines: Through presentations to the San Francisco Building Owners and Managers Association and to the city's Animal Control and Welfare Commission and Board of Supervisors, we pushed San Francisco to implement guidelines for reducing building lighting and construction features (such as excessive windows) that contribute to the deaths of hundreds of millions of birds every year in North America.

Save Our State Parks: We participated in the statewide campaign and organized local letter writing and petition signing to keep California's state parks open and funded during the fiscal crisis.

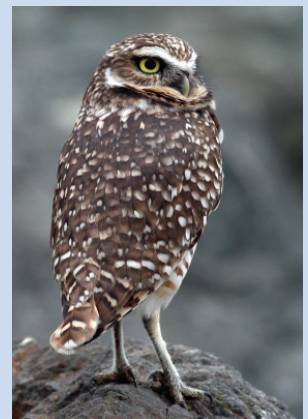
Restore Sharp Park: We continue to contribute to the community-wide effort to restore Sharp Park in San Mateo County to its natural wetland and coastal scrub setting, which is necessary to save the endangered San Francisco Garter Snake and the California Red-legged Frog that live there.

Protecting the Emeryville Crescent: We testified and organized a letterwriting campaign to oppose provisions in the City of Emeryville's General Plan that would have allowed for potential trail construction through the Emeryville Crescent, a recognized marine preserve and tidal wetland preservation area.

Upcoming issues for 2010: Our efforts to protect wildlife in parks and open spaces and to make Bay Area cities safer for wildlife will continue in 2010. We will also be deeply involved in commenting on the National Park Service's new dog management rule, which will greatly affect shorebirds, including Snowy Plovers, at Crissy Field and Ocean Beach. **Because new issues continually arise, we need the help of members like you to write letters, call elected officials, and testify at public hearings on behalf of birds and their habitats. Please join us and help make the Bay Area a better place for birds and the people who appreciate them.**

The Burrowing Owls of Cesar Chavez Park

How advocacy, science, and volunteer involvement can combine to help Bay Area birds



For years, Western Burrowing Owls returned to Berkeley's Cesar Chavez Park to spend the winter

foraging among its open fields and roosting in its ample squirrel burrows. After an owl was attacked by an off-leash dog in 2007, GGA volunteers began monitoring the owls and worked with the city to fence off a small portion of the park to create a wildlife protection area. In 2009, the project expanded to include over 30 docents who regularly visit the site, provide educational materials about the owls to park visitors, and record data about the owls and visitors' use of the park.

Photo taken at Cesar Chavez Park by GGA member Phil Price (2009)